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CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PROPOSED CANAL,

FOR MAKING
A COMMUNICATION

BETWEEN

The Friths of CLYDE and FORTH.

THE numerous and important Advantages that would flow from the happy Completion of such a Communication, are so very obvious and incontestible, that however divided Mens Opinions may be, as to the Manner of effecting it, they seem to be universally agreed, that it would be of the highest Benefit to the commercial Interests of *Britain* if it was effected.

A laudable Desire of contributing to so useful a Design, induced the Board of Trustees in *North Britain*, to direct a Survey to be made by Mr. *Smeaton*, that the Practicability of such a Communication might be ascertained, and that some Estimate might be made of the Expence that would attend the Execution of it.

His Report shewed clearly that the Thing might be done, and done in two different Ways, with a Certainty of having Water enough for the Execution of each of them; and having proposed the Number of Locks necessary for the Canal, in that Tract which he most approved, he computed the Expence at about 80,000*l.* Sterling.

But after the making this Report, a considerable Time elapsed without any Thing farther being done, nor does it appear that there was any Probability that any Thing would have been done, if some public-spirited Persons from a Prospect of the Advantages that would more immediately accrue to Themselves from such a Communication, had not, upon mature Deliberation, formed a Scheme for making such a Canal, upon a Plan somewhat reduced and brought within the Compass of Half the Expence, which they judged might be raised by a private Subscription.

In the Prosecution of this Design, they caused the most exact Enquiries to be made, in Consequence of which, there were likewise two different Tracts of a Canal proposed, shorter than that of Mr. *Smeaton*'s, and for either of which, according to the most exact Calculations, there was no Difficulty found in procuring Water sufficient for the Purpose.

The Canal proposed by the Bill, will consist of a smaller Number of Locks than Mr. *Smeaton*'s, each of them Ten Feet wide, and Six in their Rise and Fall. The Canal itself will be Twenty-four Feet wide, Four Feet deep, and about Twenty-nine Miles in length.

length. The largest Boat this Canal will admit, may be Nine Feet and a Half wide, Fifty-five in length, and drawing Three Feet and a Half Water. The Burthen about Thirty Tons. But the Boat, in all respects the best calculated for this Navigation, and which will be found capable of answering all the Purposes of Trade, will be only Thirty-six Feet in length, and Nine wide, drawing Three Feet Six Inches Water, which will carry about Twenty Tons.

In Support of this Undertaking, all the usual and proper Steps were taken; the Design was publickly advertised; several Meetings were had, in which the Terms, the Number of the Shares, and all the other necessary Circumstances were settled, (to the Satisfaction of the Parties most interested in the commercial Advantages of such a Canal, and the landed Gentlemen in the Shires of *Lanerk*, *Sterling*, and *Dunbarton*, through which the Canal was to pass) and were adjusted in so satisfactory a Manner, that in Consequence of Meetings held for that Purpose, every Thing was agreed, and the Landholders requested their Representatives to support a Petition for carrying this Canal into Execution, when presented to Parliament; in Consequence of which a Bill has been brought in, framed with much Accuracy, and upon the most mature Deliberation, for the Accomplishment in the compleatest Manner possible, of so desirable a Purpose.

In an Affair of so great Consequence as this, and which for that Reason must naturally occupy the Attention of the Public, there is no great Reason to wonder that different Sentiments have arisen, and that many Objections, some flatly contradictory to others, should be raised from a Variety of Motives, into which it is by no Means necessary to enquire, if the Objections themselves can be satisfactorily answered.

One of the principal of these is, that the proposed Canal will not be so large as Mr. *Smeaton's*, or so magnificent as some People may affect to wish it. But if this Canal will answer all the Purposes of Trade, by admitting Vessels from Twenty to Thirty Tons, of such a Construction as may enable them to navigate either of the Friths, as well as any of the *Clyde* Galberts, there seems to be no just Foundation for their being offended at their not carrying Forty Tons, which was all that Mr. *Smeaton* proposed in his larger Canal; more especially as these Vessels will pass from Sea to Sea in the Space of a Day, and carry Goods at less than One Third of the Expence with which Land-Carriage is at present attended.

It has been suggested that the Terms proposed, though thus circumstanced, are too high, and that Two-pence *per* Ton ought not to be allowed here, when the *English* Inland Navigations are only allowed Three Halfpence *per* Mile. But when it is considered that the Roughness, Inequality, Rockyness of the Ground, the great Difference of the Summit, and that at an Average the Difference of the Fall will, in the Space of a Mile, be double to that of the *English* Navigation; and of Course the cutting the Canal much more expensive, the same Reason that induced the giving Three Halfpence a Mile in one Case, will support the Demand of Twopence in the other, because it is impossible for the Undertakers to do it under, with any Probability of Success.

It is said, that in Process of Time, possibly the Profits arising from this Canal may be exorbitant in Favour of the Proprietors, and that therefore they ought to be limited. To this, several Answers may be given; according to a very exact Account taken by Lord *Napier* long before this Design was in Agitation, the annual Land-Carriage was computed at somewhat more than 8,000 Tons. The Undertakers admit that, at present, it may be 10,000; and if this should be the annual Tonnage on their Canal for some Years, the Profits will not amount to quite Four *per Cent.*: And if, at the Distance of many Years, the Carriage should double, the Dividends might double also. But the *first* is a Fact; the *latter* a Supposition only; and it certainly cannot be conceived, that the Subscribers would consider Four *per Cent.* or even the Possibility of getting Five or Six as a Reward for the risking their Money, especially when it is considered that the *English* Inland Navigations, circumstanced as this is, that is without an exclusive Property, are no where at a Premium, though without any Limitation. It is also to be remembered, notwithstanding Suggestions to the contrary, that, as it has been before observed, it appears both from Mr. *Smeaton's*, and from these Gentlemen's Plans, that several other Communications may be made, and even a larger Canal executed, without any Fear of Want of Water. The proposed Canal is to begin just where Mr.

Smeaton's

Smeaton's did, though the contrary of this has been also asserted; and there is nothing in the present Bill to hinder the carrying on a Canal from this to the *Barns of Clyde*, unless the Difficulties and the Number of Locks that might be necessary, should obstruct such a Continuation; and then this surely makes nothing against the proposed Canal, but, on the contrary, shew that it was very reasonable to make it terminate as it is intended.

It is insinuated, that the present Canal seems to be calculated for the Benefit of *Glasgow*, and the Proprietors of the *Carron Works*; but when it is considered how large a Share they bear in the Expence, and that so far from violently opposing, that they do not oppose at all, the making any Cuts that shall appear to be necessary or expedient, from their Canal to other Places, to which a Water Carriage might be advantageous, there seems to be very little Ground for taking Exceptions at their not consulting other People's Interests, but leaving them at Liberty, (as well as setting the Example) of consulting their own Interests in what Manner they shall think fit.

This Canal when made will most certainly facilitate the Passage of many Kinds of heavy Goods, which, from their great Bulk and small Value, could never have afforded the Expence of passing by Land. It may also, and very probably will, encrease the Carriage of Goods that did go by Land, by lessening the Expence of Carriage, and thereby substituting Conveniency in the Place of Necessity. In the very Cutting of this Canal, from the Discovery of the interior Contents of the Soil, many Advantages may arise to the Landholders, and Provision has been made in the Bill that they shall reap the full Benefit of them; and if any Advantage arises from their Carriage to the Proprietors, this surely cannot be thought unreasonable, especially when it is considered, that in this and many other Respects, the Canal will be of infinite Service in promoting the Cultivation, and encreasing the Population on both Sides of the Country. Circumstances these, of such Consequences to the Publick, that one may reasonably expect no Man of a free, ingenuous, and public Spirit, will endeavour to obstruct them.

Some who have suffered their Imaginations to be so heated by the Idea of a large Canal, as to propose bringing not only Vessels of Forty Tons, which Mr. *Smeaton* declared to be the largest that were fit for *any* inland Navigation, but of Fifty—Sixty Tons, nay, of such a Size as to be navigated thither from *America*, in order to find a Passage for such Vessels, have talked of encreasing the Depth of the Canal to Nine Feet, which will of Course require it to be Sixty in Breadth; and, with the accumulated Works which this would render necessary, would swell the Expence to more than treble Mr. *Smeaton's* Estimate. But if we take in also another Proportion, of carrying the Mouth of the Canal still lower than the *Barns of Clyde*, which would be indeed necessary for Vessels of such a Burthen, the Charge would rise to 300,000 *l.* or even to 500,000 *l.* or more. This appears no Difficulty to them, because they are for throwing the whole, be it what it will, upon the Publick; and rather than not have a wide, extensive, and magnificent Canal, they plainly intimate that it would be better to have no Canal at all, which is very strange, at least, if not a very unintelligible Species of public Spirit.

But the Bill now depending in Parliament is quite of another Nature. It provides for publick Benefit, by allowing private Persons to promote it, together with their own Advantages, at their own Expence. It has guarded against every Inconvenience with which the Execution of such a Canal might be attended, and given rational and constitutional Remedies where-ever Persons might think themselves aggrieved. It is plainly calculated to serve the commercial Interests of that Part of the Country, and at the same Time to be of the utmost Utility to the landed Interest also. It is founded upon and regulated by the Precedents of *English* inland Navigations; and if ever it should be thought expedient to make a wider or more extensive Canal, for answering still more beneficial Purposes, on Mr. *Smeaton's* or any other Plan, it is improbable that any Cause should prove so effectual to excite such an Undertaking, as the Advantages that might follow from suffering this to take Place. Whereas, if the publick Spirit of the present Proprietors should serve only to lead them into a very large Expence, attended with no small Trouble, and at the same Time defeat not only their Wishes, but the Wishes of all those who have supported them, it may occasion such a Damp as will not be in a long Time recovered. On the other Hand, should they be suffered to proceed, their Success would undoubtedly prove a great Source of public Spirit.

CONSIDERATIONS

On the Proposed

C A N A L,

For making a Communication between
the Friths of Clyde and Forth.

